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ABSTRACT

The two Desiderata programs which each serve 36 severely emotionally handicapped and emotionally handicapped/educationally mentally handicapped students as part of the Phoenix (Arizona) High School program are described. Results of the evaluation concluded that the two programs should be merged for consistency of programing, cost effectiveness, and wider offering of academic courses and experiences. Individual sections are devoted to the current Desiderata program philosophy, needs of the multiproblem student, the program's educational component (four levels), and the Desiderata clinical program (which stresses group therapy). Appendixes provide state and federal legislation mandating special education, the program budgets, and diagnostic categories of the students. (DB)

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# DESIDERATA PROGRAMS

## A Unit of Phoenix Union High School District #210

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TABEL OF CONTENTS


| | Page |
|---|---|
| Development of Desiderata Program | 1 |
| Desiderata Program - Philosophy | 2 |
| The Multi-Problem Student | 3 |
| Educational Component | 3 |
| Desiderata Clinical Program | 4 |
| Appendix A | 7 |
| Appendix B | 8 |
| Appendix C | 9 |

# DEVELOPMENT OF DESIDERATA PROGRAMS

Desiderata Programs opened its doors to students August, 1977. It was designed to serve 36 severely emotionally handicapped students with a staff of one coordinator/social worker, one psychologist, three special education teachers, three instructional aides, and one secretary.

Prior to that time the Phoenix Union High School District was servicing SEH students through private placement. This was proving to be quite expensive and each year tuition was being raised. It was felt by district administration and the board of education that a more cost-effective program could be created within the district as well as such a program could provide more intensive services to the student by drawing on the district resources.

Another factor to causing the district to consider creating this program was Operation Child Find. More and more students with severe emotional problems were being drawn to the district schools. Therefore, the district found itself placing increasingly more students in private programs.

The need for the program was so great that Desiderata opened its doors to a full 36 students on the first day. As the year progressed the district soon found that the structure of the program did indeed meet the needs of the severely emotionally handicapped student. Students diagnosed as educationally-mentally handicapped with severe acting-out problems also began to be referred to Desiderata. Due to the slower learning styles of the EMH student, they could not be integrated into the program. Therefore, plans were begun for a second Desiderata to meet the needs of these disturbed EMH students. The severity of the emotional problems presented by the students led to the addition of a psychiatric consultant on a one day per week basis during that first year.

In August 1978, Desiderata II opened its doors to service the disturbed EMH student. This program was also staffed like the Desiderata I program and designed to serve 36 students. The structure and organization of the two programs was the same; however, the curriculum content was different. Basic and remedial level courses, as well as life skills and pre-vocational curriculums, were offered in the Desiderata II program.

By the end of school year 1978-79, the two programs were evaluated and the following conclusions were made:

1. For consistancy of programming, the two Desiderata programs should be merged.

2. For cost effectiveness of program operation, the two Desiderata programs should be merged.

3. For a wider offering of academic courses and experiences, the two Desiderata programs should be merged.

4. The emotional needs of the students were so great that additional clinical staff needed to be added.

Therefore, in August 1979 the two Desiderata programs merged to serve 72 students who would be educationally diagnosed as severely emotionally handicapped and educationally mentally handicapped with severe acting-out problems. The program then became known as Desiderata Programs. The staff then was made up of the following:

1. One (1) Chairperson
2. Four (4) MSW Social Workers
3. Six (6) Special Education EH and EMH Teachers
4. Eight (8) Instructional Aides
5. Two (2) Secretaries
6. One (1) Security Aide
7. One (1) Custodian
8. One (1) Psychiatric Consultant, 1 day per week
9. One (1) District Psychologist, 2 days per week

This continues to be the structure and organization of the program and the staffing pattern has remained intact.

## DESIDERATA PROGRAM - PHILOSOPHY

Desiderata Programs is the Phoenix Union High School District's program for severely emotionally handicapped, and educable mentally handicapped students with emotional problems.

The program's objective is to offer educational opportunities to students who are prevented by emotional factors from functioning on a large campus even with self-contained classes and a maximum amount of support. The students referred to this program represent a number of diagnostic categories ranging from school phobias and anxiety neuroses through psychoses in partial remission.

The goal is to promote an educational progress of the students by modifying the emotional problems so that the students may return to their home campuses or into a suitable vocational program. This process involves working more with the family systems in helping the families to better assist the student in their educational tasks. Other community resources are regularly involved in promoting these educational goals for the students in the program. Emphasis is placed on the milieu approach. There is consistent communication between staff and a low student staff ratio. Through the immediate interaction between the staff and student within the program environment, the student is able to feel safe in their learning process to eventually modify his/her behavior and attitudes in a more positive and constructive direction.

The student is individually scheduled for academics and assigned to a social worker who acts as the student's case manager. The entire staff meets on a daily basis to develop and review educational and treatment plans, as well as to coordinate the milieu process.

## THE MULTI-PROBLEM STUDENT

Federal law 94-142 has enfranchised a population of students that traditionally have not been served by the public educational system. The primary psycho-educational diagnosis for our students at Desiderata is that of emotionally handicapped. However, numerous students have secondary learning disabilities, physical handicaps, mild retardation, and/or problems of an organic nature. The program also has had several students with cerebral palsey. Concommitantly, some students live outside of the nuclear family system such as group homes, foster homes, residential treatment centers, and state institutions for the mildly retarded. This extends the community network to not only other institutions and their staffs but to various units of the Arizona Department of Economic Security, such as foster care, protective services, the department of developmental disabilities and mental retardation and welfare assistance. Desiderata receives numerous students from the Department of Corrections who have already served time in juvenile correctional facilities requiring our staff to work closely with parole officers. Many of our students are on probation in an effort to prevent incarceration. We are involved with the court system and may be asked to testify as to the student's psychosocial needs, progress in school, and family situation, thus assisting the courts with making appropriate decisions regarding child placement.

As we are all aware, the learning process does not exist in a vacuum. A student's home environment contributes to his/her ability to learn, respond, and ultimately give up dysfunctional behaviors. It is therefore incumbent upon us to also function as a systems change agent. That is, to be able to mobilize community systems and programs when necessary to assist the student and/or his/her family. This is often a frustrating experience, expecially with the present-day economic realities. These community resources are drying up fast. The paradox is that we are presently serving in a public school day treatment program students for whom there are no other services or who are deemed "too sick" by other agencies, such as state hospitals and residential treatment centers, to service. This promotes additional stress for our staff, especially when we are dealing with a student that is either a danger to himself or to others. Since we serve a federally mandated population we have less options than the community and state have. This also forces us into a situation of having to be more creative in how we effect change with many students since we are essentially, for all practical purposes, "on our own." In addition family support is often lacking with our students.

In terms of the mental health community, there are times when we must become quite aggressive when advocating for the needs of a student. Many times we must coordinate protective services, the court system and funding resources to obtain appropriate services and placements.

## EDUCATIONAL COMPONENT

The educational component at Desiderata Programs is made up of four levels. Because the students range in educational ability from non-reader to extremely high functioning, the teaching staff must be very skilled and divergent. Within the school students are assigned one of six homerooms and move from class to class changing teachers after each period. This enables the teaching staff to specialize in one or two subject areas. The one exception to this is a homeroom that stays self contained for the first three periods of the five

period school day. It should also be noted that all class periods are 40 minutes in length with a 10 minute break in between.

The first level is the academic offering. Desiderata uses the district curriculum and district approved text book list. Every required course for high school graduation, grades 9 thru 12, is offered. A few elective courses such as typing, shop, and P.E. are also offered. Emphasis is placed on helping students complete the required courses for graduation and on reaching required proficiency levels in math, reading, and writing skills.

The second educational offering is the pre-vocational tract. This curriculum includes: life skills, pre-vocational, basic and practical courses. The students are divided and grouped according to learning ability. A general rule is that all students with average and above average IQ scores are programmed for the academic tract. Students who have a below average IQ score are programmed for the pre-vocational tract. Non-reading students are registered for the district basic course curriculum which is geared at the 4th grade and below. All students who are classified as EMH are enrolled for the district's practical courses.

A third level to the Desiderata educational component is Instrumental Enrichment. Instrumental Enrichment (IE) is a product of Dr. Reuven Feuerstein and his collaborators in the Hadassah-WIZO-Canada Research Institute in Jerusalem. The materials are copyrighted.

The general goal of IE is the teaching of efficient learning skills to slow-learning students as well as to normally functioning and gifted ones. The expectation is that these skills will enable the student to benefit more from their life experiences and their other learning opportunities. It has been found that IE has increased a student's IQ score as well as increasing his/her abilities to have increased success with his/her academic subjects.

The fourth level of the educational component is new to Desiderata and the teaching staff is just beginning to integrate its concepts into the program. It is called Learning in New Dimensions. This program was brought to the Phoenix Union High School District by Dr. Charles Schmid, Director of Learning in New Dimensions, in San Francisco, California. It is a teaching technique which incorporates music, relaxation techniques, visualization, suggestion, acting out, and others. These techniques are all part of the method developed by Dr. George Lozanov, a Bulgarian psycho-therapist. It is belived that this process taps unused powers of the mind.

## DESIDERATA CLINICAL PROGRAM

Desiderata Programs has on its staff four master degree level social workers who provide the thrust of the clinical services to the students. Each social worker is assigned 18 students. The consulting psychiatrist works primarily with the social workers as they assess the students total psyco-social situation and develop individual psycho-educational treatment plans.

The program has a 30 day initial evaluation period whereby the multi-disciplinary team assess the students' individual needs and makes therapeautic plans accordingly. The social worker will assist the teacher and instructional aide staff with developing milieu approaches to the student and how best to deal with the student therapeutically within the classroom environment. This may at

times entail instructing the staff on the best way to work with the students resistive behaviors. This may at other times involve integrating an extremely withdrawn student with the rest of the students or restraining the more overly acting out student. Every student in the program, is required to be part of at least one therapy group per week.

Every student is required to be involved in a homeroom group. The social worker, teacher and instructional aide hold a weekly group session to discuss student interaction, student-staff interaction, and numerous other topics that may come out throughout the course of the school year. The student strongly identifies with this group as he/she assembles with it every morning at nine o'clock for homeroom and class, once a week for a structured group session, as well as meeting with them at the end of every school day to regroup, relax, and exchange information with the homeroom staff as to how the day went.

Throughout the five years of the Desiderata Programs existence, the group therapy component has been refined and re-refined. We now hold eleven group sessions per week. In addition to homeroom groups, we have the following specialty groups.

A. GIRLS GROUP - This group is led by a woman social worker, a woman teacher and a woman instructional aide, who meet once weekly with all female students. As female students are a minority at Desiderata, the girls view this group as a special time to "connect" with the other girls in the program and to openly discuss female related issues without the instrusion of any males. This has been a successful group now for five years.

B. YOUNG ADULT GROUP - This group is composed of a highly selected group of more mature adolescents who have more sophisticated verbal skills and ego strengths. Topics range from sexuality, birth control, and male/female relationships to emotional separation from the family environment and issues relating to individuating from those family systems upon completion of high school and getting ready for the "adult world." This has been a very popular and successful group at Desiderata.

C. ASSERTIVENESS GROUP - This has been a ongoing group for three years and is especially designed for the withdrawn, socially immature, nonverbal student. The group focuses on ego enhancement, social and verbal skills, and field trip experiences to practice newly learned skills. Many of Desiderata's more severely disturbed, thought-disordered youngsters have benefited from this group experience.

D. FAMILY GROUP - This group is designed to enhance student awareness as to family conflict, the specific roles that they themselves play within their family system, and how best to cope with their basically dysfunctional family sytsem. Because of the sensitivity of dealing with the family, this group has been more difficult for the students to cope with. These students represent numerous forms of family systems; however, the majority would be single parent families and reconstituted or blended families.

E. SENIOR GROUP - This group explores career and vocational opportunities with Desiderata's graduating seniors. Discussions include vocational training, career and covocational trends in Arizona, work habits and attitudes necessary to be employed. Field trips are a part of this group, including vocational and community colleges, job opportunity programs, and apprenticeship programs.

F. SOCIALIZATION GROUP - This group is composed of fairly verbal, unsocialized students who would benefit from a highly structured group experience which includes verbal processing as well as experiential exercises.

Family therapy has become an important aspect of the treatment process at Desiderata. Actual family work is limited, due to the general resistance and gross dysfunction of many of our students' family systems. However, social workers do meet with families in the school or at the students' homes whenever possible. Our knowledge of the student in relationship to his/her family system has been by far our best tool in understanding the student's observable behaviors in school, even though interventions with these family systems can be very non-productive. We address student issues within the context of their own natural system, which can therefore give the staff better ideas on how to work with the student within the school environment.

APPENDIX A

DESIDERATA PROGRAMS

SERIOUSLY EMOTIONALLY HANDICAPPED (SEH)

A. MANDATE:

15-1010 (HB 2023, 1977) "All school districts shall develop a district plan for providing special education to seriously emotionally handicapped children within the district. Such plan shall be submitted to the State Board of Education on or before July 1, 1978. The plan must have approval prior to August 1, 1978."

B. DEFINITIONS: STATE (Arizona)

"Seriously emotionally handicapped" means a child who because of Serious social or behavioral problems, as determined by evaluated pursuant to ARS 15-1013, is unable or incapable of meeting the demands of regular classroom programs in the public schools and in the opinion of diagnostic and instructional personnel the child requires special classes or special services designed to promote his educational and emotional growth and development.

PL94-142 (FEDERAL)

(8) "Seriously emotionally disturbed" is defined as follows:

(i) The term means a condition exhibiting one or more of the following characteristics over a long period of time and to a marked degree, which adversely affects educational performance:

(A) An inability to learn which cannot be explained by intellectual, sensory, or health factors;

(B) An inability to build or maintain satisfactory interpersonal relationships with peers and teachers;

(C) Inappropriate types of behavior or feelings under normal circumstances;

(D) A general, pervasive mood of unhappiness or depression; or

(E) A tendency to develop physical symptoms of fears associated with personal or school problems.

(ii) The term includes children who are schizophrenic or autistic. The term does not include children who are socially maladjusted, unless it is determined that they are seriously emotionally disturbed."

APPENDIX B

DESIDERATA PROGRAMS

1981/82 BUDGET

| FUNCTION | LOCAL | FEDERAL | TOTAL |
|---|---|---|---|
| ADMINISTRATION: | | | |
| Salaries - Certified | $26.274 | -0- | |
| Salaries - Classified | $ 9.068 | -0- | |
| supplies and materials | $ 2.400 | -0- | |
| | ($37,742) | (-0-) | $ 37,742 |
| INSTRUCTION: | | | |
| Salaries - Certified | $97,364 | -0- | |
| Salaries - Classified | $55,495 | $7,452 | |
| Supplies and Materials | $ 6,500 | $1,000 | |
| | ($159,359) | ($8,452) | $167,811 |
| INSTRUCTION SUPPORT: | | | |
| Salaries - Social Worker | $19,803 | $59,336 | |
| Consultation | $13,640 | $ 6,000 | |
| | ($33,433) | ($65,336) | $ 98,779 |
| OPERATIONAL: | | | |
| Salaries - Clerical | $10,250 | -0- | |
| Salaries - Custodian | $13,384 | -0- | |
| Salaries - Security | $ 7,000 | -0- | |
| Employee Benefits | $59,642 | $12,556 | |
| Local Conference | $ 200 | -0- | |
| | ($90,476) | ($12,556) | $103,032 |
| | ($321,020) | ($86,344) | $407,364 |

COST PER PUPIL:

At an enrollment of 72 students, $5,627.83 per pupil.

However for school year 1980/81, Desiderata served 144 students at $2,828.91 per pupil.

Desiderata Programs' budget is 79% District funded and 21% federally funded through Part B, Education of Handicapped.

APPENDIX C

DESIDERATA PROGRAMS

Diagnostic categories of the students attending Desiderata Programs for the school year 1981-82.

The Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, third edition, was used for this information.

| NUMBER OF STUDENTS: | CODE: | CATEGORY: |
|---|---|---|
| 1 | V71.09 | No diagnosis or condition on Axis I. |
| 2 | 295.92 | Undifferentiated Schizophrenia chronic. |
| 1 | 295.94 | Undifferentiated Schizophrenia chronic with acute exacerbation. |
| 1 | 295.95 | Undifferentiated Schizophrenic in remission. |
| 1 | 300.40 | Dysthymic Disorder. |
| 3 | 301.60 | Dependent personality Disorder. |
| 3 | 301.70 | Antisocial Personality Disorder. |
| 1 | 301.82 | Avoidant Personality Disorder. |
| 5 | 301.83 | Borderline Personality Disorder. |
| 2 | 301.84 | Avoidant Personality Disorder. |
| 5 | 312.00 | Undersocialized Aggressive Conduct Disorder. |
| 1 | 312.10 | Undersocialized Nonaggressive Conduct Disorder. |
| 5 | 312.21 | Socialized Nonaggressive Conduct Disorder. |
| 12 | 312.23 | Socialized Aggressive Conduct Disorder. |
| 1 | 312.35 | Isolated Explosive Disorder. |
| 2 | 313.22 | Schizoid Disorder of Childhood or Adolescence. |

| NUMBER OF STUDENTS: | CODE: | CATEGORY: |
|---|---|---|
| 4 | 313.81 | Oppositional Disorder. |
| 1 | 300.40 | Dysthymic Disorder. |
| | 317.01 | Mild Mental Retardation. |
| 3 | 300.40 | Dysthymic Disorder. |
| | 312.23 | Socialized Aggressive Conduct Disorder. |
| 1 | 300.40 | Dysthymic Disorder. |
| | 312.23 | Socialized Aggressive Conduct Disorder. |
| 1 | 301.60 | Dependent Personality. |
| | 312.00 | Undersocialized Aggressive Conduct Disorder. |
| 1 | 301.60 | Dependent Personality Disorders. |
| | 312.23 | Socialized Aggressive Conduct Disorder. |
| 5 | 301.60 | Dependent Personality Disorder. |
| | 300.40 | Dysthymic Disorder. |
| 1 | 301.82 | Avoidant Personality Disorder. |
| | 314.00 | Attention Deficit Disorder Without Hyperactivity. |
| 2 | 302.52 | Transsexualism, Homosexual. |
| | 312.23 | Socialized Aggressive Conduct Disorder. |
| 1 | 305.22 | Cannabis Abuse Moderate. |
| | 312.23 | Socialized Aggressive Conduct Disorder. |
| 1 | 312.00 | Undersocialized Aggressive Conduct Disorder. |
| | 305.01 | Alcohol Abuse Continuous. |
| 1 | 312.00 | Undersocialized Aggressive Conduct Disorder. |
| | 300.40 | Dysthymic Disorder. |

| NUMBER OF STUDENTS: | CODE: | CATEGORY: |
|---|---|---|
| 1 | 312.10 | Undersocialized Nonaggressive Conduct Disorder. |
| | 314.01 | Attention Deficit Disorder with Hyperactivity |
| 1 | 312.10 | Undersocialized, Nonaggressive Conduct Disorder. |
| | 300.40 | Dysthymic Disorder. |
| 2 | 312.21 | Socialized Nonaggressive Conduct Disorder. |
| | 305.22 | Cannabis Abuse Moderate. |
| 1 | 312.21 | Socialized Nonaggressive Conduct Disorder. |
| | 300.40 | Dysthymic Disorder. |
| 1 | 312.23 | Socialized Aggressive Conduct Disorder. |
| | 314.00 | Attention Deficit Disorder without Hyperactivity. |
| 1 | 313.00 | Overanxious Disorder. |
| | 314.00 | Attention Deficit Disorder without Hyperactivity. |
| 1 | 317.01 | Mild Mental Retardation. |
| | 312.00 | Undersocialized Aggressive Conduct Disorder. |
| 1 | 317.01 | Mild Mental Retardation. |
| | 302.81 | Fetishism. |
| 1 | 301.60 | Dependent Personality Disorder. |
| | 300.40 | Dysthymic Disorder. |
| | 304.31 | Cannabis Dependence Continuous. |
| 1 | 312.22 | Pyromania. |
| | 301.70 | Antisocial Personality Disorder. |
| | 312.23 | Socialized Aggressive Conduct Disorder. |
| 1 | 317.01 | Mild Mental Retardation. |
| | 314.00 | Attention Deficit Disorder without Hyperactivity. |
| | 312.23 | Socialized Aggressive Conduct Disorder. |

| NUMBER OF STUDENTS: | CODE: | CATEGORY: |
|---|---|---|
| 1 | 317.01 | Mild Mental Retardation. |
| | 312.23 | Socialized Aggressive Conduct Disorder. |
| | 301.60 | Dependent Personality Disorders. |
| 14 | 315.50 | Mixed Specific Developmental Disorder. |
| 3 | 315.10 | Developmental Arithmetic Disorder. |
| 7 | 315.00 | Developmental Reading Disorder. |